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THE ANTI-GERMAN OPPOSITION IN BULGARIA

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Description

An examination of those elements in Bulgaria which oppose the pro-Axis regime.

29 February 1944

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SUMMARY

1. The majority of the Bulgarian people is pro-Russian and anti-German, and opposes the present pro-Nazi, Bozhilov government. Anti-government activities range from the speeches of "tolerated opposition" in the Subranie (Bulgaria's parliament) to the sabotage performed by the underground.

2. Factionalism ("partisanstvo") has been characteristic of Bulgarian political life for many years. Before 1934, there were more than thirty parties and factions. This renders difficult the study and understanding of present day political conditions. The majority of Bulgarians, and practically all Macedonians domiciled in Bulgaria, believe that parts of former Yugoslav and Greek Macedonia and parts of Western Thrace are Bulgarian territories, and therefore should be incorporated in Bulgaria.

3. The present authoritarian regime consists of the Regency, the Cabinet, and the Subranie. The regency is composed of Prince Kyril, Professor Filov, and General Mihov. Of the Cabinet members Dobri Bozhilov, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Docho Hristov, Minister of Interior, and General Russi Russev, Minister of War, hold the key positions. The Bozhilov regime is supported

by former authoritarian Premier Tsankov, by the quasi-fascist organizations Brannik, Ratnik, the Legions, and Otets Paisi; by the majority of the Macedonian brotherhoods, and above all by high ranking Bulgarian army officers, the German army, and the Gestapo.

4. The parliamentary opposition consists of fewer than 20 deputies representing the old center and leftist parties, and led by Nikola Mushanov, a member of the democratic party. The underground opposition consists of: the Pladne group, a small faction of the Agrarian party which differs widely from the majority of the agrarians on the Macedonian question and the future of the Bulgarian dynasty; Zveno, a pressure group which introduced totalitarianism into Bulgarian political life in 1934, some of whose leaders are said to be in contact with General Drazha Mihailovich; the Communists, the most numerous and most active element in the underground, supported by Moscow, who in the 1920's worked for a Balkan Soviet federation and are now working for a free independent Bulgaria. On the question of Macedonia-Thrace and on the dynasty, they appear much less radical than Pladne and Zveno. They receive powerful support from the Bulgarian communists domiciled in Russia -- Dimitrov, Kolarov, and Vlahov.

The so-called "new communism" is said to be spreading rapidly among all classes in Bulgaria. This movement favors close ties with Russia (even at the expense of curbing Bulgarian sovereignty) in order to secure Soviet support for the satisfaction of national and territorial claims.

All these groups are represented in the active guerrilla organization, the Fatherland Front. The best estimate places the number of Bulgarian guerrillas at 20,000, divided in two "armies." They are rapidly growing and the results of their sabotage, capture of arms, and clandestine propaganda are reported from all parts of Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Thrace. Despite vigorous repressive measures taken by the government, the underground is making inroads even in the remotest villages.

THE ANTI-GERMAN OPPOSITION IN BULGARIA

Out of the complexity and confusion of present political conditions in Bulgaria one fact stands out: the majority of the Bulgarian people oppose the pro-German Regency and the pro-German government of "technicians." Anti-government activities range from the speeches of the "tolerated opposition" in the Subranie to the sabotage performed by the active underground, which so far includes only a relatively small section of the population. While social, economic, and ideological issues contribute to the cleavage between government and opposition, the present deep-seated antagonism springs chiefly from fundamental differences on the war and on Bulgarian foreign policy in general.

I. TRADITIONAL BULGARIAN FACTIONALISM

Bulgarian political life for many years has been characterized by extreme factionalism. Until May 1934, when all political parties were declared illegal, there were more than thirty such parties or factions, some of which boasted no more than a leader and a few thousand adherents.

Frequently, personalities counted for more than programs, and many factions resulted from disagreements between party chiefs and strong political personalities.

Whenever Bulgaria had a period of relatively democratic, representative government, it was made possible only through a coalition. Since about 80 percent of Bulgaria's population are peasants, some observers believe that if elections were conducted without intimidation and police interference, a representative peasant party could easily secure a clean cut majority. Such an assertion is, however, purely theoretical and does not take into account the prevailing political factionalism, "partisanstvo." Bulgarian peasants, like the rest of the population, are split into several factions, whose differences, especially with respect to Macedonia-Thrace, often seem as irreconcilable as those between parties of the right and the left.

The great majority of Bulgarians and Macedonians domiciled in Bulgaria regard parts of Greek and Yugoslav Macedonia as pro-Bulgarian in sentiment. They maintain therefore that these territories, as well as part of Thrace, should be permanently incorporated into Bulgaria. Macedonia was to have been included in the first independent Bulgaria planned by the Russians in 1878, but this was prevented by the Congress of Berlin. In 1912, 1916, and 1941, they occupied some or all of this territory. In 1913 and 1920 it was taken away. After the first world war Bulgaria lost its portion of Thrace as well. Whatever may be the validity of Bulgaria's claims, the people and the present government are in essential agreement on these territories, despite the fact that the people oppose the war, are pro-Russian and anti-German, and do not support many of the government's internal policies. Some observers report that there is a growing movement for Macedonian autonomy rather than return to Serbia and Greece or even re-annexation to Bulgaria. This sentiment has in the past produced the most violent internal strife, and can be regarded as the point of departure for Bulgaria's relations with her neighbors and with the rest of the world. The picture of Bulgarian political life is further complicated by the fact that factions and parties which disagree on domestic issues are often likely to agree on questions of foreign policy, or vice versa.

II. THE PRESENT REGIME

At present Bulgaria is under an authoritarian regime consisting of the Regency, the Cabinet, and the Subranie. The Regency, established after the death of Tsar Boris III in August 1943 and acting in behalf of the seven-year-old Tsar Semeon II, is composed of Prince Kyril, brother of Boris, Professor Filov, and General Mihov.

Little is known about Kyril's personality. He appears, however, as the most ambitious member of the regency. It is generally believed that he lacks his brother's intelligence and ability, as well as his political experience. He has shown himself to be pro-German, despite recent rumors that he and Nikola Mushanov, a former Bulgarian prime Minister, had made an attempt to break away from the Nazis. Former Premier Filov is an archaeologist by training and profession. He was educated in German universities, and seems to have a preference for things German. He has been thoroughly loyal to the Nazis. He signed with the Axis 1 March 1941 as Prime Minister, and after the death of Boris was promoted to the regency. He has had little political experience. General Mihov is a professional soldier with a good but not distinguished record. He was promoted to the regency from the position of War Minister. He is

said to enjoy popularity in the army because of his exertions in the interest of Army personnel. He is believed to be pro-German, but is also reported to have refused to send Bulgarian troops to the Russian front even at the time of Germany's greatest successes there.

The Cabinet consists of ten ministers. Dobri Bozhilov, Prime Minister since September and still Minister of Finance, is a financier by profession, and loyal to the Germans. General Russi Russev, Minister of War since September 1943 is said to have been educated in Russia, and has a good military record. It was rumored early in January that he had been placed in "protective custody" by the Germans. Docho Hristov, a former teacher, lawyer, and deputy in the Subranie, holds the key position of Minister of Interior, charged with the maintenance of internal order and tranquility. He does not seem to be as extreme in his pro-German views as his predecessor, Gabrovski, but is thoroughly loyal to the regime. The remainder of the Cabinet consists of reliable technicians with no political following, except for Ivan Beshkov, Minister of Agriculture, an Independent Agrarian, and former President of the "Union of Agricultural Cooperatives," who is said to be the most popular member of the government.

The Subranie (a single chamber parliament) is not representative. It consists of 160 deputies, only one-eighth of whom represent the so-called "tolerated opposition." The remaining seven-eighths are chosen supporters of the government.

The Bozhilov government is supported by Professor Tsankov, ruthless leader of the extreme Bulgarian nationalists, who was mainly responsible for the overthrow of Stamboliski's regime in 1923; -- by many reserve officers, and by such quasi-fascist, ultra nationalist organizations as the Brannik, the Ratnik, the Legions, and the Otets Paissi. The Brannik is a youth organization sponsored by the Bozhilov government. The regime created it partly because it feared the rival Ratnik organization, which seems to have remained personally loyal to former Minister of Interior Peter Gabrovski. "The Legions" is a kindred organization, while the Otets Paissi (named after Father Paissi, an eighteenth century Bulgarian monk revered as the first Bulgarian nationalist) has apparently remained the intellectual proponent of extreme Bulgarian nationalism. Its leader is the well-known Sofia professor, G. P. Genov. Despite much propaganda this extreme chauvinism has never become a popular movement.

The present government is also supported by the majority of the Macedonian "bratstva" (brotherhoods), representing more than half a million Macedonians domiciled in Bulgaria. The "bratsva" are social-cultural organizations, but have also exercised political pressure and have given material support to the IMRO, whose present chief, Ivan Mihailov, is reported in Zagreb, Croatia. His relations with Pavelich, the leader of Puppet Croatia have been intimate for some years. They were almost certainly associated in the assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia in 1934. Mihailov apparently still demands an "autonomous" Macedonia, completely independent of Balkan countries.

The numerical strength of all these pro-government elements cannot be exactly determined, but it is certain that altogether they amount to only a small minority of the people. The regime maintains its precarious position only because it is backed by high-ranking army officers, by the German army of occupation, and by the ubiquitous Gestapo. It seems entirely committed to a pro-Axis policy, but its future course is unpredictable. It does not desire open war with any great power, but seems determined to put up at least token resistance to any Allied attempt at invasion. The government is cooperating with the Germans in building fortifications and in facilitating German military preparations.

It has also acquiesced in Bulgarian occupation of parts of Serbia, to which it does not lay claim, even though it may consider such a step as only temporary. The recent air raids on Sofia have disrupted its administrative functions. The Bozhilov government has continued to maintain formal diplomatic ties with the Soviets, though relations with Moscow have been cool and often strained. It has opposed vigorously the Soviet sponsored underground in Bulgaria.

III. THE PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION

Strictly speaking there are no political parties in Bulgaria, since they have never been legally restored. Thus, the organization (if any) of the parliamentary opposition is probably loose and indefinite. Most of the pre-1934 parties have, however, more or less clandestinely reemerged. Many who are now counted in the opposition ranks formerly belonged to the old Communist, Agrarian, Social Democratic, Democratic, or Radical Parties. In 1931, the combined strength of these five parties would have given them well over two-thirds of the seats in the Subranie. After the last elections (1939-40, strictly controlled by the government) the opposition was allowed only 20 out of 160 seats. Thus the parliamentary opposition in no way corresponds to the actual opposition in the country. Knowing this, the present regime has not dared to allow free elections. A month ago, it postponed for another year even its own "controlled elections."

A break in the opposition ranks occurred soon after the meeting between Hitler and King Boris, 17 November 1940. The government at that time apparently agreed to bring Bulgaria into the war. When this news reached Sofia, left wing groups went underground.

Nikola Mushanov emerged as the leader of the moderate, "law and order" elements, better known as the "tolerated

opposition." A former premier, member of the Democratic Party whose advanced age and long political experience has given him great personal prestige, Mushanov remains loyal to the dynasty and favors a constitutional monarchy on the British model. In 1940, he attacked the government for permitting the King to decide on war, disclaimed any responsibility on the part of the opposition for such a decision, and demanded that the people be left to make the choice between war and neutrality. More recently he "led a revolt" in the Subranie in protest against government anti-Semitic measures. He favors good relations with Russia and with the other Balkan states, is anti-German and pro-Ally. He has never renounced Bulgarian territorial claims. In cooperation with other opposition members and even with some prominent government supporters, he has demanded that Bulgarian troops be ordered to evacuate territories to which Bulgaria has no claim. Shortly thereafter, Minister of Interior Hristov promised in a speech in December 1943 that "soon after the war the [Bulgarian] troops would be withdrawn from Serbia," -- meaning of course only those areas never claimed by Bulgaria.

After the recent Roosevelt-Churchill-Inonu meeting, Mushanov attacked the government once more. He accused it of leading the country to ruin and demanded that it resign.

Since the 1940 split between right and left, tolerated and persecuted, in the ranks of the opposition, the parliamentary opposition has also been backed by the Agrarian party, potentially the most numerous single party in Bulgaria, under the leadership of Dimiter Gichev and Virgil Dinov, also anti-German, pro-Ally, pro-dynastic, and revisionist. Mushanov seems qualified to head a moderate pro-Ally government, but he could do so only with the full support of the Agrarians. Even then, a Mushanov regime might well prove to be only another "Kerensky interlude." Both he and the Agrarians have been definitely opposed to the small but highly publicized left wing Agrarians known as the Pladne group.

IV. PLADNE

The Pladne group is so-called after its newspaper -- Pladne (Noon), long since suppressed. It is estimated by some to number no more than ten to fifteen percent of the agrarians. It is now operating underground and uses the usual weapons: clandestine leaflet, clandestine radio propaganda, and sabotage. Recruits are obtained almost exclusively from the village population. A few of its leaders have escaped abroad, and are giving short wave broadcasts from London. It is not known whether these are at present in contact and agreement with those inside Bulgaria.

The London group is opposed to the Bulgarian dynasty, and seems to favor Bulgaria's joining some kind of federation of all the South Slavs. They apparently expect this federation to be dominated by the Serbs, and ruled by the Karageorgevich dynasty of Yugoslavia. In line with this policy, Pladne has advocated close Bulgarian collaboration with Mihailovich's Pan-Serb guerrillas, and it is naturally bitterly hated by those Macedonian groups which want Bulgarian not Serb rule. Mihailovich propaganda has represented the whole Agrarian movement in Bulgaria as pro-Pladne, as favoring King Peter's government, and as imbued with the spirit of "its late leader Stamboliski." Stamboliski in fact did not favor a Serb-dominated

Yugoslavia, much less a Serb-dominated "Greater Yugoslavia" which would include Bulgaria.

Stamboliski signed for Bulgaria the treaty of Neuilly (1919) which established Bulgaria's post-war frontiers. On the way out of the hall he declared to a group of journalists: "I have signed the treaty, but I believe that sooner or later it will be revised. My policy aims at peace and the brotherhood of peoples. We intend to live up to our obligations, but we shall not cease appealing to the conscience of the world for justice to defeated Bulgaria." Less than a year before his death in 1923, Stamboliski pleaded at Lausanne Bulgaria's case for a territorial outlet on the Aegean Sea. In spite of his realization that Bulgaria would have to seek harmonious relations with Yugoslavia, he was not in favor of Serb domination, or of the supremacy of the Karageorgevich dynasty. If Stamboliski had wanted to get rid of the Bulgarian dynasty, he could have done so in the spring of 1919, when he was all-powerful in Bulgaria, and the twenty-four year-old Boris was at his mercy. The real Stamboliski never stood for friendship with Yugoslavia "at any price." Because of its policy of subservience to Mihailovich's cause, Pladne has incurred the hostility of many Bulgarians as well as of the Partisan Movement in

Yugoslavia.

Georgi M. Dimitrov, (not to be confused with Georgi Dimitrov, the leader of the former Comintern), Dimiter Katzankiev, Ivan Kostov and Kosta Todorov, are the leading members of Pladne outside Bulgaria. Dimitrov, a physician by profession, is reliably reported to have been in Mihailovich's pay "as agent or spy" in 1937 when Mihailovich was Yugoslav military attaché in Sofia. Katzankiev, a former lawyer, is at present a member of a "Free Bulgaria Committee" in London, and has for years been in the pay of foreign governments, as practically all Pladne people abroad have been. His broadcasts to Bulgaria are said to be especially resented by many Bulgarians.

Ivan Kostov, reported at times in London and at times in Jerusalem, once taught Mihailovich Bulgarian, when the guerrilla leader was military attaché at Sofia. A teacher by profession, Kostov served in pre-war days as illegal messenger between Pladne groups in Sofia and Belgrade. Kosta Todorov is an adventurer, who has recently published an autobiography, Balkan Firebrand.

Nothing is known about the leaders of Pladne inside Bulgaria. Because of the vigilance of the Gestapo and the Bulgarian authorities it is doubtful whether any known members are at liberty. Agrarians such as Nedelko

Atanasov, Alexander Obov, and Hristo Stoyanov have been reported to be under police surveillance, because they are suspected of pro-Pladne sympathies. Many Pladne people have been executed, and others are in concentration camps. Those who are free and active in sabotage seem to be working with the Communist underground, which has a quarter-century of experience in underground organization and activity, and is supported and directed from Moscow.

V. ZVENO

Although not a political party, but rather a political club and a pressure group, Zveno has played an important part in Bulgarian political life. It was responsible for the establishment in 1934 of a totalitarian government of "technicians" or "specialists." This idea introduced by Zveno has persisted through many political changes in Bulgaria during the past ten years. In fact, the present government of Dobri Bozhilov claims to be non-political and composed of "specialists."

In spite of this basic similarity to the Bozhilov government, The Zvenari (men of Zveno) differ radically from the present regime on the fundamental issue of the war and the Macedonian-Thracian question. There are plausible rumors of clandestine contact between Zvenari, such as Damian Velchev and Dimo Kazasov, and General Mihailovich. Zveno's attitude on the future of Bulgaria may therefore be identical with that of Pladne. This seems likely when it is remembered that on coming to power in 1934, Zveno disbanded the IMRO, which regularly agitated for the incorporation of Macedonia into Bulgaria, and which fomented disorders in Yugoslav Macedonia. The Zveno attack on IMRO was made as a necessary prelude to a rapprochement with Yugoslavia.

The number of Zvenari is not known. In the past, they were a small group led by Damian Velchev, Kimon Georgiev and Dimo Kazasov. They were supported by the Officers League, which in turn had control of the army. This accounts for their success in the coup d'etat of 1934. They fell in January 1935, because the Officers League withdrew its support. The Officers League itself was dissolved two years later and it is not known whether it has been reconstituted.

Zveno was the creation of a few determined middle class intellectuals, and never developed into a popular movement. Its leaders have alternately been reported in concentration camps and free, but under police surveillance. It is not known whether Zveno is acting alone or in cooperation with other underground Bulgarian groups, but it is most probable that it maintains contact with Pladne, despite the fact that Pladne has a leftist program, and Zveno a rightist one in domestic affairs.

VI. THE COMMUNISTS

The Communists form the most numerous and most active underground group in Bulgaria, and they are, and have been traditionally in close contact with Moscow. As in Hungary and Germany conditions favorable to the growth of Communism existed in Bulgaria at the end of the World War. Bulgaria had its own brand of "Bolsheviki" who were particularly active in the late summer and fall of 1918. But during Stamboliski's administration (1919-1923) communism was not allowed to develop. The agrarian leader was interested in a "Green Entente" not in a Red International. The Green Entente was understood to mean an international association of peasant parties, such as those of Maniu in Rumania and Radich in Croatia, which was to be formed after they had each come to power in their own country. After the fall of Stamboliski, 9 June 1923, and the succession to power of the authoritarian and terrorist Tsankov, many agrarians, thrown violently into the opposition, joined hands with the communists. The widespread risings of September 1923 were a joint agrarian-communist affair led by the Communists. Most Agrarians who survived the fall and winter of 1923 retired eventually to their farms. In April 1924 Tsankov's government dissolved the communist organization, thus driving it underground.

An article published in the Berlin Rote Fahne, 3 August 1924, declared that the only real solution for the Balkan problem was a social revolution in each Balkan state, to be followed by the establishment of a Soviet federal republic in which every Balkan nation would be included as an autonomous member. Some, if not all, of the details for this social revolution had been worked out before the announcement in the Rote Fahne. On 4 March 1924 the London Times reported that Bulgaria was marked as the centre of communist revolution which would spread and envelop the whole of the Balkans. No doubt V. Kolarov, a native Bulgarian then Secretary of the Third International in Moscow, was well qualified to organize such a revolution. After Bulgaria had been communized, it was to have become a base of action. The Macedonian movement, with the IMRO as nucleus, and the Croat Peasant party were to be converted to communism and used to overthrow the Yugoslav regime. Underground activities in Bulgaria reached a peak in the spring of 1925. In that year Tsankov struck at the Communists for the third time in two years, and until 1931 little was heard of communism in Bulgaria. This was due, in part at least, to changes in Moscow on the subject of the World Revolution.

Communism reappeared in Bulgaria in 1931 in the form of the "Workers Party" and showed considerable strength, electing 31 deputies to the Subranie out of a total of 274. If the elections had been entirely free, the Communist party would probably have proved even stronger. In the Sofia municipal elections of 1933 the communists sent a majority (19 out of 35) to the city council. Since the disbanding of the party in 1933 and the dissolution of all political parties after the Zveno coup in 1934, the communists have been driven underground again. Little or nothing is known about their present leaders. Many of them, including Lyuben Dyukmedzhiev, former leader of the 31 deputies in the Subranie, have been reported interned in concentration camps. Many must be outside Bulgaria, in Russia. It is known that Bulgarians such as Georgi Dimitrov, until recently leader of the Third International, Vasil Kolarov -- former Secretary of the Third International -- and the Macedonian Communist Dimitriye Vlahov, reported in November 1943 elected, while still in Moscow, to be Vice President of Tito's Anti-Fascist Council, are working for the Soviet cause in the Balkans.

VII. FATHERLAND FRONT

The "Fatherland Front" (Otechestven Front) is the name given loosely to the active Bulgarian opposition. With the probable exception of Mushanov's following, which has insisted on legal, constitutional means of opposing the government, all elements of the opposition appear to be represented. The brunt of sabotage and armed resistance to the government falls, however, upon the so-called Naroden Front -- known also as the Patriotic Front or the People's Front -- which appears to have some connection with the Fatherland Front. The Naroden Front consists of leftist elements, communists, socialists, and Pladne agrarians. Zveno too is most likely represented. It is said that Gichev and Dimov, the moderate Agrarian leaders in the Subranie, have secretly instructed their followers to gather arms and to cooperate with the communists when the hour to strike comes. It would seem that the Fatherland Front is broadening its basis of membership by attracting more and more elements which belonged to the left center and center parties.

Whatever uncertainties may exist about the exact composition of the Fatherland Front, there is little doubt that it is guided and supported by Moscow. Information about its program, coming from several sources contains

all the important points of Georgi Dimitrov's article on Bulgaria published in Pravda 27 December 1943. The salient points of this program include immediate termination of the alliance with Germany and stopping of foodstuffs and raw material exports to the Reich; revocation of the declaration of war against England and America and establishment of friendly relations with these countries and especially with Russia; recall of Bulgarian troops in Yugoslavia and cooperation with the Yugoslav Partisans in driving all Germans out of Bulgaria and the Balkans; protection of Bulgarian national interests and the settlement of territorial questions between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia in friendly understanding and in accordance with the principles of the Atlantic Charter; "liquidation" of the Bulgarian fascist government and fascist organization, freeing of political prisoners, restoration of civil rights, and ending of racial discrimination; protection of the social and economic welfare of the urban and rural population; defense of "national, economic, political, and labor interests against foreign interference."

This program is urged upon all Bulgarians in order that they may achieve a "truly national Bulgarian policy." The program is as important for what it omits as for what it includes. The Bulgarian royal house is not mentioned

at all. If it is reasonable to assume that Prince Kyril and the regency are considered fascists and therefore unacceptable under point five of the program, it probably cannot be assumed that the seven-year-old Semeon II is in the same category. This omission was made either out of deference to the popularity of Boris and Semeon among the Bulgarians, which is still considerable, or in the hope that once the Bulgarian people are given a chance of a free vote they will choose a republican form of government. In any case if the "Fatherland Front" considered it advantageous to condemn the entire royal house it would presumably have done so.

Moreover, all reference to Macedonia and Thrace is omitted. The door is left open for a possible solution of the Macedonian question. If Tito's program including the proposed creation of an autonomous Macedonia, to be incorporated into a future federal Yugoslavia, had the sanction of Moscow, it can be assumed that this is the solution envisaged in point four of the program. It is impossible to determine at present the reaction of the Macedonians in Macedonia, of the 700,000 Macedonians living in Bulgaria, or of the Bulgarians to such a solution. But it is doubtful whether easy agreement can be reached. The program of the "Fatherland Front" makes

no mention of Western Thrace, which was incorporated into Bulgaria in 1941. Most Bulgarians consider this area Bulgarian territory, and the Fatherland Front is probably catering to this view, in order not to lose its popularity over an issue with the final settlement of which it will probably not have much to do.

The Fatherland Front program seems so moderate and non-revolutionary that if it were not in line with the present world-wide trend among local communist parties, looked on with favor if not actually sponsored by Moscow, it would be difficult to explain. The Balkan Federation contemplated by the Soviets in the middle twenties has apparently been abandoned, and the Communists who dominate the Fatherland Front are much less radical in their plans for Bulgaria than Pladne and Zveno.

Perhaps the most important result of Moscow's recent policy and propaganda has been the rapid growth of the so-called "new communism" in Bulgaria. It has been reported that many Bulgarians, even among the bourgeoisie, favor an alliance with Russia. They are said to be ready to accept curbs on Bulgaria's post-war sovereignty if such a close alliance with the Soviets would assure them what they consider a fair degree of national and territorial unity.

Moscow's announcement of its new "autonomy act" may be expected to provide a powerful stimulus for the "new communism," since it appears to offer Bulgaria, like other nations, a chance to gain the advantages of association with the USSR without entirely forfeiting its own sovereignty.

VIII. SIZE, ORGANIZATION, COMPOSITION, AND ACTIVITIES OF THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT

Estimates on the strength of the Bulgarian guerrillas vary between 1,000 and 60,000. The first figure was given in a public speech by the Bulgarian Minister of Interior about two months ago, and is surely an understatement. The second figure is probably too high, and appears in a reliable report, which concludes that 20,000 is nearer right. This active underground seems to be growing rapidly. In addition, prisons and concentration camps hold many thousands of potential members.

The underground is divided into two "armies," the Army of the Rhodope, operating from the Rhodope Mountains, and the Army of the Balkans, operating from the Balkan Mountains. Each of the armies is subdivided into 200-250 small bands which are controlled by "cells" consisting of several members each. In organization and discipline the armies follow military lines. There is no information about the nature of the liaison between the two armies, but each seems to be a fairly closely knit unit.

It is reported that the Balkan Army adopted the following five points at a Congress held 15 November 1943 in the neighborhood of Karlovo in the Balkan Mountains.

1. To militarize the bands.
2. To procure food and lodging for the winter.
3. To organize sabotage.
4. To commit acts of terrorism against certain persons.
5. To draw a plan of action for spring.

The armies are said to be using a "military recruiting system, and calling-up orders are sent out" periodically. Students from Plovdiv, Tchirpan, Karlovo, and Panagyurishte are said to have responded to "recruiting orders." A medical unit has been organized "including six nurses from the Stara Zagora Hospital."

A definite pattern of activity is followed when a town is captured. After the destruction of taxation and mobilization records, the property of the rich is seized and often "shared with the poor." This behavior was characteristic of Yugoslav Partisans in their earliest days. But they have long since abandoned such practices.

Some of the most ardent members of the underground are said to be youthful, idealistic communists referred to as "shumtzi" (forest men).

In their revolutionary zeal the "shumtzi" seem to resemble more closely the early Russian Bolsheviks than present day Russians. Many of them are former university students. It is significant that students of Sofia University

put up a determined fight last November against an attempt on the part of the government to make membership in Brannik compulsory.

While this youthful element is naturally the most active and also the most extreme, the underground bands include older members, teachers, lawyers, and other professional men, as well as Soviet-trained Communists dropped by parachute or smuggled into Bulgaria through Rumania. These older men seem to exercise a certain restraining influence on the exuberance of the more youthful element.

Occasionally small groups of soldiers and officers are reported as joining the underground. It is impossible to estimate their number or the number of those reported to have joined Tito's forces, but so far desertions from the army have not assumed mass proportions. The Minister of Interior also admitted publicly not long ago that there were communists among the local mayors. Government supporters have demanded that the civil service be purged of communist sympathizers. However, nothing seems to alarm the government as much as the spread of communism to the villages. The daily "Utro" recently declared that to combat communism among the peasants is the first responsibility of the government. Travelers passing through Bulgaria

during the past month or so report that peasants in the fields greet passing trains with the clenched fist salute.

To counteract the growth of communism the Bozhilov government granted an amnesty last November to all shumtzi, hoping to win them over to its side. The results of this attempt were so meagre that since then the government has relied on the Gestapo and on the Bulgarian fascist elements to combat communism. Also a new highly mobile "gendarmerie" is being created out of trusted government adherents. The government seems unwilling to entrust the army with the job of policing the country, not only because it may be needed for other tasks, but also because the rank and file of the army cannot be relied on to carry out orders against the underground.

The activities of the underground vary greatly according to place and circumstances. To get arms, ammunition, and provisions is a major problem in spite of the assistance which the Soviets may be providing. This explains the reports coming from every part of Bulgaria of isolated attacks by "communist" bands on villages, for the purpose of seizing arms. Late in October, the big cooperative "Napred" was plundered and food supplies were carried away. Shops in two villages in the vicinity of Plovdiv were attacked at the same time,

and flour and soap were reported "confiscated." Cheese stores have also been attacked and sizable quantities (10,000 kilos ready for shipment to the army in one instance) were either destroyed or "confiscated." Communications in all parts of Bulgaria and Macedonia have been one of the main targets of the underground. Unconfirmed accounts as of the middle of November report such large scale sabotage activity in southern Bulgaria that at times "road traffic stoppages" resulted between Sofia and Plovdiv. At the same time a direct attack was made on a German military train carrying German tanks, which was blown up. The so-called "Hristo Botev" battalion named after a nineteenth century Bulgarian poet and revolutionist, operating in Macedonia, is reported to have carried out extensive railroad sabotage. Occasionally particularly unpopular administrators have been done away with, such as Spasov, assistant chief of the State Security Department at Russe and Popov, District Governor ("Okoliski Upravitel") of Asenovgrad who were murdered in December 1943.

Clandestine radio and leaflet propaganda is an effective weapon in the hands of any underground movement, and the Bulgarian has not neglected it. Leaflets known as "pozivi" have been distributed at night under doorsteps and in letter boxes. Extensive use has been made of

inscriptions on walls. Radio broadcasts from secret radio transmitters have also been employed. The case of Dr. Alexander Peev who was executed for transmitting by means of a secret radio caused much speculation in Sofia in November 1943.

Nothing is definitely known about liaison between the Bulgarian underground and Tito, but the latter has recently announced the formation of a Bulgarian Partisan brigade under his supreme command, and contact between Yugoslav and Bulgarian guerrillas is frequently reported.

These underground activities are characteristic of a resistance movement just coming into existence in a satellite country fused with military defeat. They have not as yet assumed the proportion of the mass popular movement in the occupied countries, like the Partisans or the Greek EAM. As the present tension and uncertainty increases in Bulgaria, it may be expected that the scale of guerrilla operations will develop correspondingly.